

**The** Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture, provides technical assistance to the Moore Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) in order to help the District implement its conservation program. The NRCS was formed as the Soil Erosion Service in the early 1930s after the "dustbowl" era in which millions of tons of topsoil was blown or eroded away in the Midwest and Southwest portions of the country. The Soil Erosion Service soon became the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), but its charge was the same-to save invaluable topsoil in order for agricultural land to remain as productive as possible and to provide technical assistance to farmers to solve soil erosion problems. Now, since becoming the NRCS in 1993, the agency has expanded its focus on natural resource problems to include not only soil erosion but also water quality, wetlands, wildlife habitat, and forestry-all while maintaining the personal technical assistance to producers that helped found the agency. The Moore County NRCS assistance comes from Angela Little, District Conservationist.

USDA NRCS homepage: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov>

USDA NRCS NC homepage: <http://www.nc.nrcs.usda.gov>

Applications and forms: <http://www.sc.egov.usda.gov>

### Conservation Programs

Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) serves as the agency's basis for providing assistance to landowners and operators. CTA provides the staff, research and technical standards for delivering technical assistance to support USDA and SWCD conservation efforts in Moore County and across the nation. Through the CTA program, NRCS assists individual land users, communities, and units of State and local government meet their goals for natural resource stewardship.

**The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**, since its inception in 1996, has served as NRCS' leading cost-sharing program for implementing conservation practices. Jointly administered with the Farm Service Agency, EQIP, through 5 or 10 year contracts, can provide up to 75% cost sharing assistance to producers to implement conservation practices as part of a tract-based total resource management system. In North Carolina, about 70% of EQIP funds are allocated in 18 priority areas with special resource concerns. Moore County has received EQIP funding in the Deep River Priority Area. Examples of conservation practices installed with EQIP funding include

**Animal Waste Management and Long Term No-Till.**

### **The Conservation Reserve Program-Standard and Conservation Reserve Program-Continuous**

provide agricultural landowners with incentives to remove high erosive and unproductive cropland from active production. The CRP-standard signup focuses primarily on forestry practices

**(planting of pines and hardwoods on cropland)**

to solve erosion problems and remove cropland from production. CRP-standard allows landowners to receive per acre rental payments for a 10 to 15 year contract period.

CRP-continuous provides incentive and rental payments to landowners to implement and maintain practices, which will help or improve water quality or enhance wildlife habitat.

Examples of these practices are filter strips, establishment of permanent native grasses, and riparian buffers. Cropland must have been cropped at least 2 of the last 5 years in order to be eligible for either CRP program.